

**Regulatory Fairness Board joint meeting with Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce  
Saturday December 7<sup>th</sup>, EMCC, Bangor.**

Members: Doug Smith, David Brenerman. Secretary of State Matt Dunlap and member Pat Kuhl were unable to attend the meeting.

Staff: Peggy Schaffer

The Regulatory Fairness Board joined the Bangor Region Chamber of Commerce for its “Hot Stove League” with area businesses and legislators. The bulk of the meeting was the presentation of its “Issues of Impact” to area legislators and business leaders. The Issues of Impact focuses on nine areas of recommendations that the Bangor Region Chamber considers to be a high priority to move the Bangor area’s economy forward.

The group discussed health care, including the importance of expanding Medicare, especially for businesses that pay wages under \$10.00. These companies have to restrict the hours for some employees to fewer than 30 hours a week in order not to have to provide company sponsored health care. Most of the employees would qualify under the expanded Medicare program, allowing the businesses to employ them full time.

The importance of expanding natural gas to more areas and more business was a key topic on energy. This included a discussion of the new pact between the New England states to cooperate on the expansion of a natural gas pipeline to expand capacity and availability of natural gas in Maine. Other conversations included the importance of a truly statewide energy and building code, which would provide consistency between communities and a standard for energy efficiency in new buildings.

The group undertook a wide ranging discussion on the tax reform, and the importance of a stable tax environment. The Bangor Region Chamber has long been a supporter of broadening the base of the tax system to include more services and to use that new revenue to lower the income tax. They also spoke about the importance of continuing the work of regionalization of services, perhaps with more services being provided by the counties, while acknowledging the difficulties of regionalization of certain services, including fire protection.

At 9:30, the panel turned the discussion over to the Regulatory Fairness Board. Peggy provided a brief overview of the RFB, which is modeled on the SBA Regulatory Fairness Board. Doug Smith expressed his frustration with the lack of progress the board has been able to undertake addressing issues of unfair regulations because of the lack of input from the business community. He noted in order for the board to really do the work the legislature intended it is important the business community bring forward issues about regulation.

Jack Quirk commented on the fact government cannot seem to do IT correctly, mentioning the Bureau of Motor Vehicle, and the issue of titles and the associated paper work (Notice of Sales) being all paper. Others discussed the issue the State’s web page was not that business friendly, or easy to find or search for things.

Other suggestions included a more seamless IT systems at the state level, so department can share data and data bases that can “talk” to each other and a continued push towards more electronic records and filings.

Another member suggested the board may have a branding problem. He noted that “regulatory fairness” may not be the issue with many businesses, and perhaps “regulatory efficiency” would be a better name. Businesses don’t necessarily feel they have been treated “unfairly” by regulatory agencies, but rather the regulatory structure is not efficient, especially when it comes to the interplay between federal, state and local regulations. A discussion of storm water regulations ensued, including the problems in Bangor of wanting the water that feeds into the Penobscot from the Bangor bog and other tributaries to be “Class B” water. Class B is essentially a cold water habitat designation, and bogs are a natural warm water habitat. Requiring businesses that border that bog, and have large impervious surfaces, to bring those tributaries up to a Class B standard is unnecessarily expensive, and does not recognize the natural state of that water.

The other example used was telecom regulation requiring a “provider of last resort” with a land line. This requires the telephone company to run and maintain expensive land lines, when perhaps new technology and cell towers would provide the same service for a cheaper cost. The suggestion was for the board to focus its efforts on system wide efficiencies and effectiveness rather than focusing on regulations that impact one business at a time. Providing a broader look at larger policy issues may be much more effective than addressing regulatory issues of individual businesses.

Doug Smith and David Brenerman both suggested the board discuss these ideas and possible activities at the January meeting. The meeting will also include a review of the annual report to the legislature. The board has also expressed an interest in talking with loan officers and others about the issues around access to capital for small business at that meeting. Staff will circulate possible dates in January for a meeting.